

People should not have to choose between heating and eating. Older Americans who are more susceptible to hypothermia and heat stroke know the importance of heating and cooling their homes. They pay their utility bills and skimp on other necessities to get by. However, no one in America should be forced to skip their medications or cut back on essential nutritional needs in order to keep their heat on.

That is from the AARP.

I ask unanimous consent to have these letters printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AARP,

Washington, DC, January 24, 2008.

Hon. BERNARD SANDERS

*U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR SANDERS: AARP applauds you for your continued efforts to increase funding for the Low Income Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program. We thank you for offering an amendment to increase LIHEAP funding for FY 2008 by \$800 million on S. 1200, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2007. We are pleased to support your amendment.

People should not have to choose between heating and eating. Older Americans, who are more susceptible to hypothermia and heat stroke, know the importance of heating and cooling their homes; they pay their utility bills and skimp on other necessities to get by. However, no one in America should be forced to skip their medications or cut back on essential nutritional needs in order to keep their heat on.

LIHEAP helps the poorest of the poor. Nearly three out of four families receiving LIHEAP assistance have incomes of less than 100% of the federal poverty level (\$16,600 for a family of three) and almost one in two have incomes less than 75% of the federal poverty level (\$12,225 for a family of three).

LIHEAP is serving more households than ever before, but still cannot meet the need. Since 2002, an additional 1.5 million households are receiving LIHEAP assistance. At the same time, requests for LIHEAP assistance in 2006 soared to the highest level in 12 years.

Additional funding is needed now. High energy prices have not gone away and the weather has proven very unpredictable—additional funding is needed now and in the future to protect some of the most vulnerable populations in America. Should you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me or Timothy Gearan of our Federal Affairs staff.

Sincerely,

DAVID P. SLOANE,
*Senior Managing Director,
Government Relations and Advocacy.*

NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, January 24, 2008.

Hon. BERNIE SANDERS,
*U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR SANDERS: On behalf of the nation's governors, we write to express our support for the Sanders-Snowe amendment to add \$800 million in emergency funding to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for FY 2008. We commend you and your colleagues for working in partnership to build bipartisan support for this proposal, and we believe the compromise of splitting this funding equitably between the LIHEAP base formula grant under the "Tier II" formula and the contingency fund is a step in the right direction.

Additional funding distributed equitably under this amendment will support critically needed heating and cooling assistance to millions of our most vulnerable, including the elderly, disabled, and families that often have to choose between paying their heating or cooling bills and food, medicine and other essential needs. With greater financial support, states will be better able to increase benefit levels in correspondence with rising energy costs, and to reach at least a million other federally-eligible households who currently do not receive assistance due to funding limitations.

The National Governors Association applauds the bipartisan efforts of you and your colleagues in reaching this compromise, and fully supports adding \$800 million to FY 2008 to help LIHEAP respond to the current emergency energy situation.

Sincerely,

JAMES H. DOUGLAS,
*Chair, Health and
Human Services
Committee.*

JON S. CORZINE,
*Vice Chair, Health
and Human Services
Committee.*

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
STATE LEGISLATURES,
Washington, DC, January 23, 2008.

DEAR SENATOR, I am writing on behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) to strongly urge you to support the amendment offered by Senator Sanders and Senator Snowe that would add an additional \$800 million to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding for FY 2008. The amendment would divide the additional funding equally between the formula and emergency contingency portions of the program.

LIHEAP is a highly efficient federal block grant program that helps our most vulnerable low-income households pay their heating bills in the winter and cooling bills in the summer. LIHEAP prioritizes at-risk households that shelter America's elderly, disabled, and very young and protects public health and safety by helping low-income families cover energy costs. By leveraging private dollars to supplement federal dollars, LIHEAP has nurtured positive, effective partnerships between the private sector and both federal and our state governments.

Millions of low-income families are burdened with the hardship of paying arrearage from both last winter's heating bills and summer's cooling bills, in addition to grappling with impending and actual shut-off situations. At a time of heightened need and with energy prices expected to continue to climb, state legislatures do not want our citizens choosing between paying an energy bill and putting food on the table, or purchasing necessary medications. For individuals and households facing these difficult choices, funding from LIHEAP makes an intrinsic difference in their ability to address such formidable challenges.

Since LIHEAP's inception, the number of eligible households has increased by 78 percent, yet in FY 2006, states were only able to serve less than a quarter of the 24.4 million eligible households. An increase in funding for LIHEAP will help ensure that households in all regions are prepared to handle both the cold and warm, and in the past few years unpredictable, weather. NCSL believes that increased LIHEAP funding should be a top priority to help low-income families, senior citizens, and disabled individuals maintain economic stability while addressing ever-increasing energy prices.

We urge you to support the Sanders-Snowe LIHEAP amendment, and to continue the fight for full funding of LIHEAP.

Sincerely,

PETE HERSHBERGER,
*Arizona Representative, Chair, NCSL
Committee on Human Services & Welfare.*

SOUTHERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, December 18, 2007.

STATEMENT ON ADDITIONAL FY 2008 LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP) FUNDING

Due to high and rising energy costs, efforts are underway in Congress to allocate an additional \$800 million to the LIHEAP program for FY 2008. Senator Dole has worked with her colleagues from cold weather states on a compromise agreement that would equitably distribute these additional funds by splitting them equally between the LIHEAP base formula grant and the contingency fund. The additional \$400 million in the base formula grant would be distributed by the LIHEAP "tier II" formula, which bases funding to states on the actual energy needs of low-income households, and therefore provides for equitable distribution to Southern states.

Recognizing the increasing need for LIHEAP funds and the interest of the Congress in providing these funds, the Southern Governors' Association supports this compromise. SGA supported a similar compromise in FY 2006 when Congress made an additional \$1 billion available for LIHEAP, split equally between the base formula grant and the contingency fund.

This compromise is an important step towards the long-term goal of a more equitable distribution of LIHEAP funding among all states. SGA urges Congress to move immediately to address equity as a priority as part of LIHEAP reauthorization.

Mr. SANDERS. I commend subcommittee chairman Senator HARKIN, subcommittee ranking member Senator SPECTER, Appropriations chairman Senator BYRD, and ranking member Senator COCHRAN for providing a total of about \$2.6 billion in funding for LIHEAP in the Omnibus appropriations bill. Their job was a difficult one. There was not enough money available to do all that needed to be done, but they did their best for LIHEAP and for our critical needs.

Unfortunately, this \$2.6 billion in funding for LIHEAP, while an 18-percent increase from last year, is still 23 percent below what was provided for LIHEAP just 2 years ago. That 23 percent reduction is not even adjusting for inflation. We are talking here about nominal dollars.

Two years ago, the price of heating oil was less than \$2.50 a gallon; today, it is over \$3.30 a gallon. In central Vermont, we have seen prices as high as \$3.73 a gallon this winter for heating oil.

According to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, due to insufficient funding, the average LIHEAP grant only pays for 18 percent of the total cost of heating a home with heating oil this winter, 21 percent of residential propane costs, 41 percent of natural gas costs, and 43 percent of electricity costs. What this means, in plain English, is that low-income families with children, senior citizens on